



Who Will You Be When You Return to School This Fall?

By Marilyn J. Dominick, Public-School Representative, Chairperson of NEW

Right now, you are probably saying “What a strange question she is asking!” In normal times and situations, the question might not seem to matter. Frankly, we have experienced an incredibly unique and challenging time as educators. Everything we thought we knew about teaching and learning, every circumstance, every educational environment, every structure, schedule, and normal routine has been up for debate and subject to change during the pandemic. Normal is not a word that even comes close to describing what we have experienced together. Even now, as we begin to plan for a fresh start, we are different than we were.

What have we learned? How has the pandemic changed us, personally and as educators? What will we do with what we have learned? How will our experience inform future practice?

Okay, take a deep breath. I am not trying to stress you out. In fact, just the opposite. My prayer for all of you is that you will follow the lead of Jesus Christ as you take these next steps.

Many Questions

It is expected for all of us to feel a little stressed at the thought of returning to our classrooms and offices. After all, there are still many unknowns. For many students, there are unanswered questions as to how much and how well they have learned the curricula during this time. How will we know what they know? Where will we begin? How will we fill in the gaps? How will we meet all the emotional needs that will undoubtedly present themselves in both children and adults? How will we get back into the routines of school? Is that even possible?

Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, (NIV), “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” We can be assured that we do not face our

challenges alone. Christ walks with us and will help us bear the weight, and He will even teach us as we go. He has a gentle approach as He walks with us, and He has even promised REST! What a promise! Educators NEED rest! We do not have to solve these issues alone! We can experience the peace of Christ, which is beyond human understanding. He is faithful to us, interceding for us, and He has our best interests at heart.

We do not know what we will face, but one thing is certain for Christian educators: God is with us, and He WILL NOT leave us...EVER!

Relationships Will Be Important

I expect our relationships with our students and colleagues will be more important than ever. Trying to regain some semblance of normalcy will be taxing for all. Some families have been in crisis, and they will need our loving kindness even more than usual. It may be that we will find ourselves lacking patience when things do not go as planned or the unexpected happens. Through it all, we must show Christ's love, mercy, and patience.

Philippians 2:5, (NIV) tells us, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." We can have His thinking! Christlikeness, following the example Jesus set while on this earth, should be our goal.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self – control. Against such things there is no law."

Aren't we blessed? This is just one scripture reference where God tells us exactly how we should be. There is no place for negative interactions. Fruit must pervade our personalities. If we are not practicing the fruit of the Spirit, we need to do that now. May I suggest that we do our best to model the fruit of the Spirit in all our interactions. This definitely will be a time when God's grace and mercy are needed as we interact with each other.

If we are to succeed in living Christlike lives, we must have our minds focused on seeking God, growing in our relationship with Him, and living as He taught us. The benefits will be great for our students, their families, our colleagues, and for everyone with whom we interact.

Perfect Peace

And for us personally, we have this promise from Isaiah 26:3, (NIV), "You (God) will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."

Thank you, Lord, that You walk with us through anything that we face and that Your peace is ours to enjoy. Amen.

God bless you as you begin your school year and your discipleship ministry to your students and colleagues. New opportunities await, and you are going to be great as you trust in Him!

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